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ABSTRACT

This publication describes the Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession, developed by the Ontario College of Teachers, a self-regulatory body for the teaching profession in Ontario. After discussing the development of the Standards, Section 1, "Introduction," focuses on self-regulation and standards of practice, principles of the standards of practice, and purposes of the standards of practice. Section 2, "Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession," presents five statements that comprise the standards: commitment to students and student learning; professional knowledge; teaching practice; leadership and community; and ongoing professional learning. Section 3, "Key Elements," presents key elements which expand on each of the five statements comprising the Standards of Practice for Teaching. (SM)

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Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession

Ontario College of Teachers
Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario

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Developing the Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession

The standards of practice for the teaching profession were developed using a variety of sources and resources. Existing statements from other educational jurisdictions were reviewed. This review included both national and international examples. Standards of practice statements from other self-regulatory bodies in Ontario were also examined.

Hundreds of members of the College and the public contributed through structured research activities to the development of the standards of practice. The structured research activities included interviews, focus groups, and written responses to questions posed on the College web site and in College publications. In addition, many participants offered feedback through e-mail, discussion groups, writing teams, and written correspondence.

A preliminary draft was reviewed by more than 500 members of the College and the public who engaged in developmental feedback sessions. Many groups and individuals also prepared written responses to this early draft. Data from the developmental feedback sessions and the issues brought forward in these responses provided the basis for the revision of the preliminary draft.

The standards of practice have been developed to answer the question "What does it mean to be a teacher?" The responses contributed by participants in the development and revision processes were highly personalized, deeply reflective, and complex. Participants spoke passionately about the importance of teaching – for now and for a future we can not yet envision.

The College anticipates this interest in the refinement of the standards of practice statements will continue. The validation process for the present document provides for many more organizations and individuals to engage in the discussion.

The standards of practice are descriptors for the teaching profession. They will also serve as a catalyst for discussion, debate, and movement toward a consensus about what it means to be a teacher.

The document, *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* was approved in principle by the Council of the Ontario College of Teachers on December 10, 1998. The Council has now invited members of the profession and the public to comment on these standards by April 30, 1999.

All the responses the College receives during this validation period will be considered before the Council discusses revising or giving final approval to the statement of the standards of practice.

You may wish to use the questions at the end of this document to frame your response. However, your comments are welcome in any form. Please see page 15 for more information.

Ce document est disponible en français sous le titre de *Normes d'excercice de la profession enseignante*.

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Introduction

Self-Regulation and Standards of Practice

The Ontario College of Teachers is the self-regulatory body for the teaching profession in Ontario.

A self-regulatory body must be able to articulate what it is that makes that professional body unique. In the case of the Ontario College of Teachers, it means answering the question "What does it mean to be a teacher?" Professional self-regulatory bodies use the term "standards of practice" to refer to the descriptors that answer this question. For the teaching profession, this description includes statements about students and student learning, professional knowledge, teaching practice, leadership and community, and ongoing professional learning.

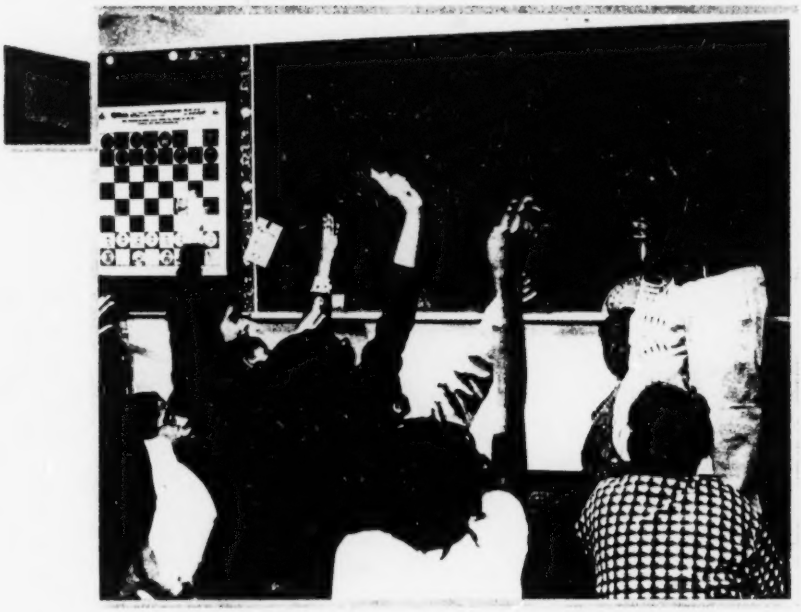
The standards of practice for the teaching profession provide the foundation for pre-service and in-service programs accredited by the Ontario College of Teachers.

This means that the Ontario College of Teachers has now assumed, through legislation, the responsibility for the accreditation of pre-service education programs at the faculties of education in Ontario universities. It also means that the College will accredit forms of in-service professional learning. In-service professional learning currently accredited by the College through Regulation 184/97 under the *Ontario College of Teachers Act* includes Additional Qualifications Courses, the Principal's Qualifications Program, and the Supervisory Officer's Qualifications Program. Another challenge will involve identifying ways to accredit other programs and the ongoing professional learning that takes place in practice.

Professional growth is at the core of teacher professionalism. The Ontario College of Teachers through the accreditation of pre-service and in-service programs based on the standards of practice provides members of the College with opportunities for this ongoing professional growth.

The professional learning programs accredited by the Ontario College of Teachers must address the professional growth needs of members from the time they prepare to enter the teaching profession to the time they retire. In this document the term professional learning refers to those programs accredited by the Ontario College of Teachers. Professional growth is a more inclusive term recognizing the many ways teachers acquire professional knowledge.

In the *College of Teachers Act*, Regulations under the Act, and in this statement of standards of practice "teacher" means a member of the Ontario College of Teachers. This definition requires that the College accredit professional learning programs for not only classroom teachers but also for members in a broad range of roles such as principals, occasional teachers, superintendents, and directors of education.



The standards of practice for the teaching profession were developed to support these principles.

Principles

The standards of practice describe what it means to be a member of the teaching profession in Ontario.
This description highlights, in a general way, the knowledge, skills, and values that are inherent to the teaching profession. They articulate the goals and aspirations of a profession with a mandate to foster student learning. Members of the College, as members of the teaching profession, foster student learning through a variety of roles in education.

The standards of practice are reflective of the beliefs and values expressed by the participants in the developmental process.
The standards of practice were developed with input from members of the College and the public. The participants in the development process recognized the contribution the teaching profession makes to Ontario society. These participants highlighted the need to ensure that professional learning programs accredited by the College are based on the standards of practice and that these programs prepare members of the profession to meet the challenge of preparing students to be contributing members of Ontario society.

The standards of practice recognize and value diversity in teaching.
The description of what it means to be a member of the teaching profession recognizes that effective teaching requires the use of a range of teaching styles and techniques. These variations afford teachers the opportunity to make choices, accommodate change, and meet student needs.

The standards of practice are based on the premises that personal and professional growth is a developmental process and that teachers move through a variety of career and life stages.

Standards of practice provide the foundation for ongoing professional growth through the professional learning programs accredited by the Ontario College of Teachers.

Teacher candidates in a pre-service program are involved in professional learning based on the standards of practice at a level appropriate for beginning teachers. Candidates in the Principal's Qualifications Program engage in professional learning based on the standards of practice as well – but from a school administration perspective. Participants in the Supervisory Officer's Qualifications Program will see the standards of practice from a system perspective. Participants in the Additional Qualification Course for Special Education experience professional learning based on the standards of practice and highlighting the needs of exceptional students.

Teachers, as they move through different career and life stages, will engage in a variety of professional learning activities. The basis for this professional learning will be the standards of practice for the teaching profession.

The standards of practice for the teaching profession are interdependent.

The question "What does it mean to be a teacher?" generates multiple responses. Focusing on a single area of the standards of practice does not address the complexity of the teaching profession.

The Ontario College of Teachers recognizes the contribution the teaching profession makes to the future of Ontario society. Members of the College also recognize that the teaching profession can not carry this responsibility alone. In order to ensure that Ontario students are well prepared to meet the challenges of the future, the teaching profession needs the support of government, employers, parents, students, and the Ontario public-at-large. As individuals, and through our respective organizations, all must work together to create classrooms, schools, and education systems where the teaching profession is able to work toward the goals and aspirations outlined in the standards of practice for the teaching profession.

Purposes

The standards of practice for the teaching profession have been developed to serve a range of purposes. The standards of practice will:

- focus on the responsibility of the teaching profession to enhance student learning;
- provide a common understanding of what makes "being a teacher" a unique professional experience;
- clarify the knowledge, skills and values implicit in the practice of teaching;
- provide the basis for ongoing personal and professional growth and the accreditation of professional learning programs;
- represent the aspirations and goals of the teaching profession;
- enhance the dignity of the teaching profession;
- acknowledge the contribution the teaching profession makes to Ontario society; and
- assist the College in fulfilling its mandate to govern the practice of teaching in the public interest.

Note:
All members of the College should be able to "see" the work they do described in these standards of practice.
The standards are not intended to be the criteria for the ongoing performance appraisal of individual members of the College. Performance appraisal remains the responsibility of the employer. In publicly funded systems, these responsibilities are outlined in the *Education Act* and Regulation 298 under the *Education Act*

Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession

The following five statements comprise the standards of practice for the teaching profession. The key elements expand on these statements.

Commitment to Students and Student Learning

Teachers demonstrate care for and commitment to students. They are dedicated to engaging and supporting student learning. Teachers treat students equitably and with respect. They encourage students to grow as individuals and as contributing members of society. Teachers assist students to become life-long learners.

Professional Knowledge

Professional knowledge is the foundation for teaching practice. Teachers know the curriculum, the subject matter, the student, and teaching practice. They know education-related legislation, methods for communication, and ways to teach in a changing world.

Teaching Practice

Teachers apply professional knowledge and understanding of the student, curriculum, teaching, and the changing context of the learning environment to promote student learning. They conduct ongoing assessment and evaluation of student progress. Teachers modify and refine teaching practice through continuous reflection.

Leadership and Community

Teachers are educational leaders who create and sustain learning communities in their classrooms, in their schools, and in their profession. They collaborate with their colleagues and other professionals, with parents, and with other members of the community to enhance school programs and student learning.

Ongoing Professional Learning

Teachers are learners who acknowledge the interdependence of teacher learning and student learning. Teachers engage in a continuum of professional growth to improve their practice.

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Key Elements

Commitment to Students and Student Learning

1. **Demonstration of care and commitment**
   Teachers:
   (a) use the curriculum and available resources to support students in their learning;
   (b) model for students the curiosity, enthusiasm, and joy of learning;
   (c) help students to appreciate their own identity, to learn more of their cultural heritage, and to build self-esteem;
   (d) demonstrate concern for student character, peer relationships, and personal aspirations; and
   (e) reinforce the rights and responsibilities students have as citizens.

2. **Support for student learning**
   Teachers:
   (a) understand and use a range of teaching methods to address learning, cultural, spiritual, and language differences, and family situations;
   (b) develop programs for students that incorporate a knowledge and understanding of human development and learning theory; and
   (c) use a variety of available resources to support curriculum expectations.

3. **Equitable and respectful treatment**
   Teachers:
   (a) accommodate the differences in students and respect their diversity;
   (b) help students to connect learning to their own life experiences and spiritual and cultural understandings; and
   (c) provide a range of ways for students to demonstrate aptitudes, abilities, and learning.

4. **Growing as individuals and as contributing members of society**
   Teachers:
   (a) encourage students to become active, inquisitive, and discerning citizens;
   (b) create opportunities for students to understand, facilitate, and respond to change; and
   (c) engage students in activities that encourage diverse approaches and solutions but also reinforce the social responsibilities students have as citizens.

5. **Assistance in becoming life-long learners**
   Teachers:
   (a) link the curriculum and learning experiences to everyday life;
   (b) encourage students to know about, reflect on, and monitor their own learning; and
   (c) assist students to develop and use ways to access and critically assess information.

Professional Knowledge

1. **Knowledge of the student**
   Teachers know:
   (a) how differences arising from cultural heritage, language, family, gender, community, and other factors shape experience and impact on learning;
   (b) how to recognize strengths and weaknesses of students;
   (c) how teaching is shaped by what is known about human development and learning; and
   (d) that teaching students with exceptionalities requires the use of specialized knowledge and skills.

2. **Knowledge of the curriculum**
   Teachers know:
   (a) the subject matter;
   (b) how knowledge in their subject area is created, linked to other subjects, and applied to life experiences;
   (c) the curriculum relevant to their subject(s); and
   (d) ways to connect curriculum expectations to curriculum resources and technologies.

3. **Knowledge of teaching practice**
   Teachers know ways to:
   (a) make knowledge and skills accessible to others;
   (b) shape instruction so that it is helpful to students who learn in a variety of ways;
   (c) motivate students;
   (d) establish and modify instructional settings;
   (e) manage time for instruction;
   (f) establish classroom management strategies that support learning and respect the dignity of students;
   (g) collaborate and structure interaction among students to ensure that shared learning, as well as individual learning, occurs;
   (h) assess and evaluate student learning, student approaches to learning, and the achievement of curriculum expectations; and
   (i) communicate and collaborate with parents and others involved in the education of students.

4. **Knowledge of the learning environment**
   Teachers know ways to identify and respond to:
   (a) the factors in a diverse and changing society that impact on instruction;
   (b) provincial legislation, local policies and procedures, and community norms that guide the decisions they make; and
   (c) change as they engage in the change process.

Teaching Practice

1. **The student**
   Teachers planning for instruction:
   (a) apply knowledge of student backgrounds, experiences, and learning styles;
   (b) apply knowledge of how students develop and learn;
   (c) apply knowledge of a student's physical, social, and cognitive development;
   (d) respond to learning exceptionalities and special needs;
   (e) adapt teaching practice based on student achievement; and
   (f) collaborate with professional colleagues to benefit student learning.

2. **Curriculum**
   Teachers:
   (a) adapt the methods of inquiry, content knowledge, and skills required in the curriculum;
   (b) link content and skills to everyday life experiences; and
   (c) integrate a variety of teaching and learning strategies, activities, and resources.

3. **Teaching and the changing context of the learning environment**
   Teachers:
   (a) carry out their duties as outlined in legislation;
   (b) establish a safe and supportive learning environment;
   (c) establish and maintain standards for student behaviour;
   (d) enhance the learning environment with a variety of curriculum resources and available technologies;
   (e) organize time and space to enrich the learning environment;
   (f) develop student activities to promote social and group responsibilities;
   (g) use classroom management skills to enhance learning; and
   (h) apply teaching strategies to meet student needs.

4. **Assessment and evaluation of students**
   Teachers:
   (a) communicate clear, challenging, and achievable expectations for students;
   (b) gather data on student performance using a variety of assessment strategies;
   (c) keep a continuous and comprehensive record of group and individual achievement; and
   (d) report and provide ongoing feedback of individual achievement to students and parents.

5. **Reflection**
   Teachers:
   (a) integrate curriculum expectations into current teaching practice;
   (b) reflect on current practice to determine if needs of individuals and groups of students are being met; and
   (c) modify and refine teaching practice using a variety of sources and resources.

Leadership and Community

1. **Responsibility and service**
   Teachers:
   (a) acknowledge the responsibility of their position;
   (b) build trust with students, parents, and the community; and
   (c) exercise professional integrity and judgement.

2. **Creation of a learning community**
   Teachers:
   (a) learn with and from their students, colleagues, and others in communities of learners;
   (b) motivate and inspire through sharing their vision;
   (c) create opportunities for students to share their learning with their classmates, schoolmates, parents, and the community; and
   (d) reach out to parents and to diverse local communities inviting them to share their knowledge and skills in supporting classroom and school activities.

3. **Sustaining learning through innovation and change**
   Teachers:
   (a) innovate and effect change through decision-making, initiating change, and evaluating and communicating results;
   (b) engage others through shared problem-solving and conflict resolution;
   (c) act both as team members and as team leaders; and
   (d) acknowledge and celebrate effort and success.

Ongoing Professional Learning

1. **Teacher learning and student learning**
   Teachers:
   (a) understand that teacher learning is directly related to student learning;
   (b) act as role models who demonstrate lifelong learning; and
   (c) engage in a variety of learning opportunities both individual and collaborative that are integated into practice for the benefit of student learning.

2. **Professional growth**
   Teachers:
   (a) recognize that continuous professional growth is an integral part of teaching;
   (b) recognize that teaching and professional growth are influenced by personal, social, and educational contexts;
   (c) understand that teaching practice is enhanced by many forms of knowledge, ways of knowing, and ways to access that knowledge; and
   (d) anticipate and plan the kinds of learning they will need to respond to a variety of educational contexts.

3. **Improving practice**
   Teachers:
   (a) demonstrate a commitment to continued professional growth;
   (b) know that professional learning is most effective when it is job-embedded, relevant and supported by others within the educational community;
   (c) reflect on their practice and learn from experience;
   (d) draw on and contribute, where appropriate, to various forms of educational research to improve their practice; and
   (e) collaborate with colleagues to enhance student learning.

Please Comment

The College of Teachers would like to receive your comments on the document, *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession.* Please send your comments to the Ontario College of Teachers at the address on the opposite page, by April 30, 1999. We are particulary interested in your responses to these questions:

1. What is your overall reaction to the standards of practice for the teaching profession?

2. How well do the five standards of practice statements on page 6 answer the question "What does it mean to be a teacher?"

3. Each of the five standards statements is expanded through a list of key elements. Please highlight in this section any comments or suggestions you have regarding the key elements. Please be sure to indicate clearly which standard and key element you are addressing.

Optional Information

Name: _____

Position: _____

Organization/Institution: _____

Mailing Address: _____

_____ Postal Code: _____

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Thank you for your assistance.

Responses should be forwarded to:

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